

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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## *The World Must Be Shown*

*(A commencement speech)*

One afternoon about forty years ago I was sitting in a hammock in a little thatched house in eastern Ecuador. On the floor sat Minkayi, an Auca Indian, telling a story into the plastic microphone of a little old-fashioned tape recorder. This is what he was saying:

“One morning I had gone a short distance in my canoe when I heard the knocking of another man’s canoe pole. It was Dabu. ‘Are you going home?’ I asked him. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘Naenkiwi says those foreigners are cannibals.’ Later I found Gikita in his house. He said he was going to get some spears. My spears were not far away. Soon I found Gikita and Dyuvi putting red dye on their spears, getting them ready. ‘Naenkiwi says those foreigners are going to eat us,’ they told me. I still had not dyed my spears, but when afternoon came they had all dyed theirs and I was just sitting there. Finally I told my mother to go down and bring my spears up so I could dye them. ‘Just bring a few,’ I said, and off she went. I asked Naenkiwi how many spears he had. ‘Two hard ones and two lightweight ones,’ he said.”

Minkayi’s story ran to six pages. He got pretty excited, telling me how he and five other men had ambushed five white men one afternoon on the Curaray River. He described the journey to the beach, up hills, across rivers, through an old clearing where he had once seen a jaguar, finally reaching the place where a small airplane had landed. He said one of those foreigners was walking up and down the beach, calling out, “Puinani! E ati puinani!” which means “Come! Come as friends! Come without harm!”

“But we rushed at them with our spears and war cries,” Minkayi said, making the vivid sound of spears striking living flesh. He spared none of the details of the long struggle, the suffering, and the Indians’ final victory when five white men lay dead.

It seemed impossible to me that this cheerful, friendly man had killed my husband. He picked up Jim Elliot’s picture from the top of the kerosene box that

served as my bookcase. “Look at him smiling at us!” he said. “If we had known him as we know you, he’d be sitting here, smiling at us today! A *cannibal!* We thought he was a cannibal!” The absurdity of it struck him funny. A big grin broke over his face.

There was nothing new to Minkayi about killing people. He and the others had done it countless times. If you think you are going to be eaten you protect yourself somehow. I thought of Jesus’ words when He was about to leave His disciples: “The time is coming when anyone who kills you will suppose he is performing a religious duty. They will do these things because they do not know either the Father or me. I have told you all this so that when the time comes for it to happen you may remember my warning. I have told you this to guard you against the breakdown of your faith.”

What a tale to tell to guard against the *breakdown of faith!* And what a strange way to begin a commencement address, you may be thinking. What you want is encouragement, not discouragement. It was what Jesus’ disciples wanted too—a few encouraging words, some guarantees that the future was going to be great.

I remember my graduation fifty-three years ago. I was so nervous I broke out in hives and never heard a word the speaker said. You’re graduating now, thank God. You’ve done a lot of work and your faithful, worn-out teachers have spent a great deal of energy and patience on you. Your parents breathe a sigh of relief that you’ve made it through this institution—and then they catch their breath a little bit thinking of the next one!

It is my heart’s desire today to give you something to hold onto for the rest of your lives. Jesus did not want His disciples to put their faith in the wrong places. He reminded them in no uncertain terms that things happen—things we don’t plan. What kind of certainty, what sort of protection, can we expect if we’re realistic? The world talks about “securities.” That usually means money in some form or other, and we all know that money insures nobody against anything. What they call life insurance is really death

insurance—death and taxes are two things we can count on. You may insure your house and it gets robbed or burned down or the roof blows off or termites chew it to bits. You pay for health insurance and then you get some weird disease that isn't covered. Somebody rear-ends your car and sues you because there was ice on the road.

But what about us Christians? Have we some guarantees? If we really pray hard enough and go to church and read the Bible and all that, don't we have a right to expect that the worst disasters will miss us and things won't be quite so bad for us as they are for everybody else?

For just a few minutes I want you to think. I want you to get both oars in the water. How would you answer a question about the Christian's guarantees? Once upon a time some Indians sharpened up their spears and then used them on some Christian men who had hoped to give them the Word of God. Those men knew that death was a possibility. They sang a hymn together: "We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender." The territory was dangerous but they went in obedience to Jesus Christ, trusting that He would give them success.

But Aucas know how to throw spears. Could God have prevented those spears from reaching their targets? Yes. Did He? No. Mystery is something we must all come to terms with. "If God were small enough to be understood He would not be big enough to be worshipped" (Evelyn Underhill).

I tell you this story, young men and women, to guard you against the breakdown of your faith. Dr. J.I. Packer says, "The popular idea of faith is of a certain obstinate optimism: the hope, tenaciously held in the face of trouble, that the universe is fundamentally friendly and things may get better." I would have had to be an optimist of the most incorrigible obstinacy to have held onto that sort of faith in the dark times of my own life. It has been the faith of the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me that has held me in the darkest valleys and the hottest fires and the deepest waters. He too went down to death for our sakes. He too was misunderstood, doubted, hated, and finally nailed to a Cross.

Packer says faith requires a going out to, laying hold of, and resting upon the object of its confidence. What we need to see today is that if the object of our confidence is the blueprint we've worked out for ourselves, we're in trouble. If the blueprint doesn't work, the faith

doesn't work. If what we call "our faith" means what we think God ought to do about things, it won't last long if He doesn't do it our way.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan His work in vain.

God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain."

**William Cowper**

How do you suppose Daniel felt about having to be dumped into that den of starving lions? What about his friends who were tied up and heaved into a blazing furnace? What about Paul, who was beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, and imprisoned? Well, of course, the end of those stories was happy—the lions didn't eat Daniel, the furnace didn't burn up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and Paul survived—for a while. But then there was John the Baptist who had his head chopped off because he was obeying his Lord and Master. Stephen was stoned to death for preaching the gospel. The book of Hebrews tells about people who were—*get this*—sawn in two because of their faith! And shall we forget the price our sinless Savior paid for our redemption? He was captured, blindfolded, slapped, punched, whipped, stripped, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a wooden Cross with real iron nails. Think about that.

The real question we need to face, ladies and gentlemen, is exactly what a Christian is supposed to do when terrible things happen. There are two choices, and only two: we can trust God or we can defy Him. We believe that God is God, He's still got the whole world in His hands and knows exactly what He's doing, or we must believe that He is not God and we are at the awful mercy of mere chance.

Jesus did not promise physical safety for His disciples. He did not expect it for Himself. Just before His death He said, "I shall not talk much longer with you, for the Prince of this world approaches." You know who that was: Satan, of course—coming to gloat over Jesus' capture and betrayal and crucifixion. It was going to

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happen for sure. Jesus knew it. But listen to what He said next: "He has no rights over me, but the world must be shown that I love the Father and do exactly what He commands."

Satan was given permission—for a while. Satan is allowed to do appalling things today too. For a while. We tremble in our boots thinking about crime, pollution, inflation, and the Great Computer Crash that's supposed to happen on the stroke of midnight, December 31, 1999. Divine permission is given for many frightening things—for a while. But Christians know what the end will be—the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.

But in the meantime, Class of 1997, the world must be shown. There has to be living proof that some men and some women today actually love God and will do exactly what He says. In the past six weeks my husband and I have been in India, China, and Mongolia. In each country we met people who, because of the story of five American missionaries killed by the Aucas, have committed themselves unreservedly to Christ.

Faith is a decision. It is not a deduction from the facts around us. We would not look at the world of today and logically conclude that God loves us. It doesn't always look as though He does. Faith is not an instinct. It is certainly not a feeling—feelings don't help much when you're in the lions' den or hanging on a wooden Cross.

Faith is not inferred from the happy way things always work. It is an act of the will, a choice, based on the unbreakable Word of a God who cannot lie, and who showed us what love and obedience and sacrifice mean, in the person of Jesus Christ.

So while we live and work, the world must be shown, uncompromisingly, clearly, unapologetically—as Daniel and Paul and five young missionaries and Jesus Himself demonstrated—that we love God and will by His grace obey.

For most of you it will not mean lions' dens or Auca spears or imprisonment, but it will mean a daily, faithful, humble, glad obedience to the same Lord who has held steady all those who commit themselves to Him. It will mean the choice between faith and unbelief, between being honest on your income tax or cheating just a little bit, between keeping your virginity until marriage or giving it away to somebody you aren't married to. It will mean the willingness to stand against what everybody's doing and what everybody says is OK.

### *Prayer for a Perplexed Graduate*

"O my God, Thou and Thou alone art all-wise and all-knowing! I believe that Thou knowest just what is best for me. I believe that Thou lovest me better than I love myself, that Thou art all-wise in Thy Providence and all-powerful in Thy protection. I thank Thee, with all my heart, that Thou hast taken me out of my own keeping, and hast bidden me to put myself in Thy hands. I can ask nothing better than this, to be in Thy care, not my own. O my Lord, through Thy grace, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, and will not lead the way. I will wait on Thee for Thy guidance, and, on obtaining it, I will act in simplicity and without fear. And I promise that I will not be impatient, if at any time I am kept by Thee in darkness and perplexity; nor will I complain or fret if I come into any misfortune or anxiety. Amen."

It will mean the surrender of what the world calls safety and an acceptance of whatever sacrifice and suffering God may choose to send. He is not finished with any of us. He assigns me new lessons every day. When I have disobeyed it has led to misery. When I have obeyed it has brought me joy. The story is God's story. The end will be glorious beyond our wildest dreams—for those who put their trust in Him.

Do it! Choose Jesus Christ! Deny yourself, take up the Cross, and follow Him—for the world must be shown. The world must see, in earnest young men and women, a discernible, visible, startling difference.

Put your trust in Him. Not in people or circumstances or dreams or programs or plans, not in any human notion of what will or won't happen, but in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Daniel and all the others—the God whose Son went through the darkest valleys so that you and I might be saved. If somebody was willing to give his life for you, would you trust him? Of course you would. Jesus loved you then. He loves you now. He'll be loving you every minute of every hour of every day of the rest of your life, and no matter what happens, nothing can separate you from that love. I know it's true. I have found that sure and steadfast Refuge in my Lord and Savior—the only real safety—the Everlasting Arms! I'm an old woman now—not just "getting older," as they say—I "done got

there"! That gives me an advantage. I've walked with God longer than you have. I know He keeps His promises.

So now you're graduating. The Prince of this world approaches. He has no rights over you—but the world must be shown that you love the Lord and will do exactly what He says.

God keep you, every one of you, from fear, from faltering, and from faithlessness. Remember that the world is watching. What sort of man, what sort of woman, do they see?

(This talk was given in 1997 at Grenville Christian College—a boarding/high school in Brockville, Ontario, Canada.)

## *Looking unto Jesus*

This is the title of a lovely little booklet by Theodore Monod. A radio listener writes, "I went ahead with plans to leave my husband and children. When the booklet came all I had to do was read the back cover and I was completely overwhelmed with the awful reality of what I was about to do, and the wonderful reality of what surrendering my plans to God could do. I returned my whole heart to the Lord and my family, seeing in a new way my sinfulness and His redemption. Though I've been a Christian for many years, the quality of my relationship with Him has been very different ever since the booklet arrived.... There is now peace between us and patience. I'm still praying for joy, but am willing to wait." You can obtain the booklet by sending one dollar and a self-addressed stamped (32 cents) envelope to Gateway to Joy, Box 82500, Lincoln NE 68501.

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Servant Ministries, Inc.  
Post Office Box 7711  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Travel Schedule May-June 1998

**May 15, 16** Toronto, Canada, Focus on the Family, Dr. Bruce Gordon, (604)684-8333.

**May 23** Memphis, Tenn., Victory Valley Auxiliary, Chyrrl Vollmer, (901)526-8403.

**May 30** Mobile, Ala., Mrs. John Blachscher, Dauphin Way Baptist Church, (334)342-3456.

**June 4, 5** Syracuse, N.Y., N.Y.S. Home School Convention, Sharon Grimes, (315)496-2410.

**June 6** Swansea, Mass., Grace Gospel Church, (508)675-7844.

**June 13** South Bend, Ind., University of Notre Dame, 800-338-2445.

**June 24** St. Louis, Mo., North American Christian Convention, (513)598-6222.

**July-August** No engagements.

## *Hymn for Grace at Table*

(tune: Sun of My Soul)

We give Thee thanks with grateful hearts.  
Grant that the strength this food imparts  
Be only used to do Thy will;  
Thy pleasure, Lord, in us fulfil.

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